

Engaging the Media: an essential element of information operations



Why Should You Work With The Media?

- If you do not tell your soldiers' story, then who will? Others who will get much of it wrong?
- Your soldiers deserve to have their story told!



Why Should the Army Work with the Media?

- **Responsibility to keep America informed**
- Clarifies who we are and what we do
- Influences decision makers
- Influences Congress
- Influences H-N population and leaders
- Influences opponents
- Writes history
- Assists in recruiting



Media Presence

“The media’s use of real-time technology **affects public opinion**, both in the US and abroad, and **alters the conduct and perceived legitimacy** of military operations. Now, more than ever, every soldier represents America -potentially to a global audience”

FM 3-0

“...must **account for our actions** with the American people whom we serve, by dealing openly and well with the representatives of the nation’s free press. We are also responsible for **protecting sensitive info...**”

Joint Pub 3-61



Value of Media Relations

Your organization will
be the subject of
media coverage

Do you want to have
a voice?



For Better or Worse

“Short of the warfighting, the most important thing I do is deal with the media.”

MG Hagenbeck
Cdr, TF Mountain



How Do We Work with the Media?

- Embedded Media
- Media Pools
- Accredited Media
- Press Conferences



Military - Media Culture Gap

On both sides, well-intentioned and patriotic people who have different roles and interests, yet need each other.

Media are:

- Paid to be skeptical and get the story right
- Afraid of being manipulated or used in deception/PSYOP
- Generally ignorant of military culture

Soldiers are:

- Paid to “win”
- Concerned unimpeded media coverage may compromise OPSEC
- Afraid of the "risk factor" associated with talking to the

Freedom



Control

Role of Your PAO



- Prepare units to engage the media
 - Training
 - Pre-interview prep
- Identify media opportunities
- Interface between unit and news representatives
- Monitor and assess command and public information

ROLE OF PAO:

Prepare *you* for *your* media interviews

- **Prepare a plan**
- Develop your agenda & message
- Gather facts and background information
- Establish ground rules
- Wargame Q &A
- Identify escorts and speakers
- Rehearse



Command Messages



-- statements or information that you work into responses that explain the command's position on a particular issue or event.

- What you want the audience to remember
- Used to tell your unit's story
- Hopefully shape the media's coverage of the issue
- Specific, not generic

Examples of Command Messages

- Our soldiers are trained and ready.
- We are here at the request of the democratically elected government.
- We hope that the Surranians will peacefully comply with UN resolutions.
- We are fully prepared to support UNSC resolutions, with force if necessary.

Words Count: What are we calling this?

- Collateral damage, civ casualties
- Crash, accident, mishap
- Criminal, suspect, murderer
- Terrorist, guerrilla, freedom fighter
- Detainee, POW



Ground Rules

- **Establish the limits of the interviews**
- Briefed to media when they arrive
- Both sides agree to follow
- Escorts monitor and enforce
- Uncooperative media must leave



Examples of Ground Rules

- **Everything is on the record**
 - Will not discuss classified information
- Protect operational and intelligence TTPs.
- Ask before taking pictures
- Do not disclose our location
- Media must be escorted at all times



Mission-specific Ground Rules

- Joint Information Bureau is sole release authority. Clear everything with them.
- **DOD releases** information concerning:
 - **Arrival** of friendly forces in AO
 - Approximate friendly force strength
 - Friendly casualties and POW figures
 - Enemy casualties and POW figures



UNIT ACTIONS

“We are our best spokesmen”

- **Take care** of the media sent to your area. Develop **a relationship**.
- Allow free and open reporting.
- **Cooperate** with the requests of the reporter **within the limits of mission, safety and**
- Tell your unit's **story**.



The Press Conference or Interview



- Open with 20-30 second summary
 - clear, concise expression of command message. Sets the tone.
- Listen, pause, think, answer
- Make each statement stand alone
- Look at the reporter, not the camera
 - importance of non-verbals

Interview Techniques

- Remain calm.
- Be honest.
- “Talk to grandma.”
- Bridge.
- If you “choke,” ask to try again



Interview Techniques

- Clarify any misunderstandings during interview
- Repeat reporters question in your answer, plus add your command message or theme
- Do not repeat negative words or phrases



Interview Techniques

- Be relaxed, confident and professional
(Nixon v Kennedy)
- Be concise. Think about what you will say before you speak.
- **Avoid military jargon.**
- Avoid using colorful or profane language.



Interview Techniques

- **STAY IN YOUR LANE**
- Confine discussion to first-hand knowledge or substantial personal experience.
- Deal in known facts. Avoid speculation.



Interview Techniques

- **Stay on the record! If you say it, it will get reported.**
- Limit your opinions. Label your opinions as opinions.
- Avoid “no comment.” “I don’t know” works.
- Don’t argue. Be firm and polite.

Conclusion

- Media is the battlespace for soldier, American, and international opinion.
- If you don't talk, someone who knows and cares less about your soldiers will.
- Feed the beast.
- Preparation is the key.



Final Thoughts:

The first engagement of the next deployment will be with the media.

The media provides the link between America's Army and everyone else.

